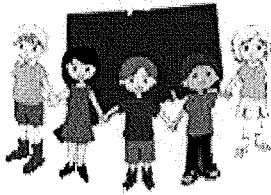


Submitted by the Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education
To the Legislature's Education Committee
January 20, 2011

Proposed Bill to Provide Education in Child Development, Child
Safety and Parenting Skills to All Students

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative in General Assembly convened:

That section 10-221a (?) of the general statutes be amended to require that child development, child safety, and parenting skills be added to the health curriculum in high school and the family and consumer sciences courses in middle school to provide students with information and skills to help them raise children who are physically, socially and emotionally healthy and more likely to succeed in school. The emphasis shall be on the needs and guidance of children from birth to five since these are the years when the way a child is raised can determine his brain development, his mental and emotional stability, and his social and intellectual capability. The child development, child safety and parenting skills component could also be provided by the school on-line or after school, or through attendance at an accredited child development/parenting skills course in the community. It could also be taught by professionals trained in this area who would come into the schools, such as the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis or members of the Connecticut Parent Educators Network (CT-PEN)



Connecticut Coalition for Child Development

To: All Public School Superintendents December, 2009
From: Joan Barbuto, Co-President; email: joanbstone@aol.com
Dr. Robert Margolies, Co-President; email: margo8@ixnetcom.com
Date: December 2009

The goal of The Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education is to get education in child development, child safety and parenting skills to all students sometime before they graduate from high school.

Reasons Why We Need This

- **Few parents take parenting courses once they become parents.** About 80 percent of people become parents, yet schools are not providing most students with information to help them with this most important job. The years from birth to five are the crucial years for a child's development, particularly his brain development, according to many studies. The way he is raised in these years determines which brain pathways will be developed and which will not, and how well he will succeed in school and in life.
- **Studies have found holding a baby and responsive care by a parent are essential** for the baby to bond to the parent. Without this bonding psychiatrists have found, children are likely to become delinquents, have mental problems or even kill.
- **Knowledge of child development, children's needs and effective parenting lays the** groundwork for better intellectual and mental health in future generations.
- **Research has shown that education in child development and parenting skills can** help prevent child abuse and neglect, behavioral problems in school, violence by children and young people, teen pregnancy, and social, emotional and substance abuse problems in children and youth.

Reasons Why We Need Child Development, p. 2

What Needs to Be Done

- Change Child Development Education from an elective to a requirement for all high school students. Currently only 8% of students take this elective course (survey by Dr. Robert Margolies)
- Incorporate Child Development Education in existing curriculum at no extra cost! Child development/parenting education courses can be provided through the Family and Consumer Sciences program **at no extra cost** as Wallingford, CT has been doing for all students in 6th and 7th grade in middle school. It could also be taught to all students through high school Family and Consumer Science courses, or in the high school health classes which all students already take.

Coalition for Child Development Education Members

The State Commission on Children
The CT Association of Public School
Superintendents
The State Department of Children and Families
CT Association of Youth Service Bureaus
The Mental Health Association of CT
Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis
Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut
The Wallingford Visiting Nurses Association
The Hyde Foundation

The CT Parent Teacher Organization
The CT Association for Infant
Mental Health
CT Voices for Children
Child Guidance Clinic of Central CT
CT Parenting Education Network
The CT Children's Trust Fund
Early Childhood Cabinet Blueprint
The Wallingford Daycare Center

Also, more than 40 individuals belong, including Yale child psychologist Dr. Edward Zigler and Yale child psychiatrists Dr. Kyle Pruett, and Dr. James Comer..

What Needs to be Taught in Child Development/Parenting Classes

Part 1

Some of the things all parents and potential parents need to know about caring for and guiding children between the ages of birth to five:

1. The responsibilities of parenthood: not just providing food, clothing and shelter to the child, but also taking care of health problems, cleanliness, protecting the child; teaching him good behavior, talking and reading to him, helping him learn, etc.
2. How to keep children safe (childproof the house, never leave a baby or toddler alone in a bathtub, use car seats, rules about matches, the stove, other dangers and reasons for them, close supervision of toddlers and preschoolers especially outdoors, etc..)
- 3.. The danger of shaken baby syndrome. All students (especially boys) must be taught that shaking a baby can cause the infant to suffer serious brain damage or even die. Articles appear about this in the newspapers every month or two, and it is most often a young man who has shaken an infant, usually because the baby won't stop crying.
4. Many good ways of stopping a baby from crying.
Feeding the child, burping the baby, changing its diaper are ways known by most parents, but other methods such as holding the baby, rocking her, singing to her, taking her for a ride in the carriage or car, etc. can be found in parenting books. If the parent feels overwhelmed by an infant who won't stop crying, putting the child in a safe place like his crib, and taking a break can help. Checking with a pediatrician may also be a good idea if crying does not stop.
- 5... The importance of holding and cuddling a baby from birth through infancy. Without this babies can actually die, according to a study by Dr. Renee Spitz, who did a study of infants in orphanages in the 1940s where babies were left in cubicles and not held. Nearly one-third died although no medical reason was found.
6. The importance of parents and caregivers talking to the baby from infancy on to help develop the baby's ability to talk.
7. The importance of reading to a child and teaching him numbers and letters as a preschooler to help him succeed in school
8. The importance of routine in the child's life. Routines give a child a sense of security, an idea of what to expect when, and a feeling of control over his environment.
- 9.. How to handle anger in children: not by punishing them, but by acknowledging their anger, asking what happened letting them talk it out and then working with them for a solution to the problem. Making the child feel guilty for his angry feelings or punishing him for being angry can lead to psychological problems later in the child's life.
- 10 The importance of a father to a child's well-being and sense of identity.

What Needs to Be Taught in Child Development/Parenting Classes – Part 2

11. Good ways of guiding children's behavior other than spanking, such as: time outs; withdrawal of privileges; distraction for 2-3-year-olds; delayed gratification; praise and rewards for good behavior; natural consequences; logical consequences, etc. For example, during the first and second year of life, a baby has a need to explore his environment to learn about things and the world around him, and he gets into things he's not supposed to. If a parent regularly hits or yells at a child for this, it can be psychologically harmful as well as ineffective. The child at this stage of development often doesn't understand why the parent who takes care of him is hitting him and just gets confused and angry. Instead, the parent can substitute of another item, distract the child, say "No" firmly and remove him from the room or put him in a playpen.

12. Child abuse: physical and emotional: what it is, why it occurs and the effects it has on children. Young people need to know that they can be arrested for child abuse, and that physical abuse of children increases the risk that the child will grow up to be delinquent, violent, a substance abuser, a criminal or psychologically disturbed, according to many studies. Emotional abuse is just as bad. Studies have shown emotional abuse can result in a child or adult who has serious mental or emotional problems.

13.. Stages of child development: what a child can and can't be expected to do at different ages. Parents and caretakers sometimes punish a child for not doing something he is incapable of doing because of his stage of development. Ridiculing or punishing a child for this is emotionally harmful, for it makes her bury her fear or anger, which in later life can emerge as phobias or anxiety disorders.

14..How to develop emotional intelligence in a child. For a child to succeed in school, in relationships with other people, and in life, emotional intelligence is more important than IQ. This needs to be developed during the first five years of life. Emotional intelligence includes five key skills: 1. Understanding your emotions; 2. Handling your emotions—being able to calm yourself when you're anxious, cool off when you're angry, control impulses; 3. Motivating yourself to do what needs to be done and keep trying; 4. Empathy—being able to understand what other people are feeling; 5. Using this information to handle relationships well and get along well with others. All this can be taught.

15..Qualities like responsibility, respect, honesty, patience, etc. can also be taught and need to be taught in the preschool years if a child is to enter school ready to learn and equipped to succeed. Child development classes can explain good ways to teach these skills during the preschool stage of development.

16, How to handle sibling rivalry and fights between children

17. The impact of parental divorce and separation on children and how to handle these situations to minimize the impact on the child.

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Author: "the ABCs of Parenting"

CT Coalition for Child Development

The Children's Trust Fund Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Project

- No one thinks they will harm an infant in their care, but research shows that incessant crying can lead caregivers to violently shake and injure babies.
- Shaken baby syndrome is the most severe form of child abuse. It happens when a caregiver shakes a baby so violently that the brain sustains significant injury.
- It only takes 3 seconds of violent shaking to cause permanent harm to a baby.
- In the most severe cases shaking a baby can cause brain damage, blindness, spinal injuries, paralysis, seizures, severe disability and even death.
- Every year in the United States an estimated 1,200 to 1,400 children are shaken for whom treatment is sought.
- 25% of all babies who are shaken die of their injuries.
- 80% of infants who survive have permanent brain damage.
- 59% of all child abuse occurs in infants under one year of age.
- Approximately 60 to 70% of shaken baby syndrome perpetrators are male.
- The consequences of less severe cases may not be brought to the attention of medical professionals and may never be diagnosed.
- Shaken Baby Syndrome prevention is not available education in our schools, hospitals, and child care settings – its' time to change that.

Shaken Baby Syndrome Can and Must Be Prevented

Let's talk to our students. They are our babysitters and our future parents. One stressful moment can change the life of a baby and - a student - forever.

**The Children's Trust Fund is a division of the Department of Social Services
It has a program on Shaken Baby Syndrome which it can provide to schools.**

Emotional Abuse Part 1

What it is and the Damage it Can Do to Children

What emotional abuse is and the damage it can do to children needs to be taught to all students in our schools to help prevent in the future much of the delinquency, drug abuse, and mental health problems we see affecting our young people today.

Emotional abuse is a pattern of parental behavior that impairs the development of a child's sense of self and self worth and his social competence). It can include:

Rejecting: refusal by the parent or adult guardian to acknowledge the child's worth or his legitimate needs. This can include refusing to touch the child or show affection, not acknowledging the child's accomplishments or belittling them, frequently using labels such as "dummy" or "stupid," humiliating the child or being excessively critical, and excluding the child from family activities.

Isolating: cutting the child off from normal social experiences, preventing him from forming friendships. Leaving him in his room for long periods, prohibiting him from playing with other children or joining after-school activities, clubs, etc. are examples.

Terrorizing: verbally frightening the child, bullying him, threatening the child with extreme punishment, setting expectations the child can't meet and then punishing him for not meeting them, teasing and scaring young children, frequent raging at the child, or threatening to expose the child to humiliation or ridiculing him in public.

Ignoring: depriving the child of needed stimulation and responsiveness, stunting his emotional and intellectual development. This can range from total disregard of the child and his needs to not talking to the child, emotional coldness, not protecting him from threats or intervening when he needs help, or comments that keep the child at a distance such as "Go someplace else if you are going to cry." Not protecting the child from threats or not intervening when the child needs help are other examples. Sometimes a parent's psychological problem, such as depression, can make the parent neglect and ignore the child.

Corrupting: encouraging the child to engage in antisocial, destructive behavior, such as sexual activity, drug abuse, assaulting other children, stealing or other criminal acts

{The Psychologically Battered Child, by James Garbarino, Edna Gutman and Janis Wilson Seeley, specialists in child development and family studies}

Emotional Abuse Part 2

1. Disconfirming: ignoring the wishes and needs of the child by discounting his thoughts or emotions Example: A child won't go to bed because he says he's afraid of the dark, and the parent says, "You're not afraid. You're a big boy." A parent should handle such a situation by acknowledging the child's fear (eg. It's OK to be afraid of the dark. I was too when I was your age. Will it help if I leave the door open and the hall light on? Mom and Dad are right downstairs and can hear if you call.)
2. Frightening threats: Example: "If you don't stop hitting your sister I'll kill you!"
3. Masking: acting as if a problem did not exist and overlooking a child's need to understand. Example: ignoring the situation if a child's pet has died, or a guest with a disability comes into the house.
4. Strategic failing: an adult demands that a child do something he is not developmentally capable of, then punishes him when he fails (A parent takes a three-year-old to a Sunday church service, expects him to sit quietly through it, then hits him when he fidgets or keeps talking.)
5. Double binding: giving conflicting demands and putting the child in a no-win situation. Example: When Jon and his father played games, Jon's father would call him an egghead if he won, and a dummy if he lost. He'd call him over for a hug, then push him away and tell him not to be a sissy. Unable to win his father's approval no matter what he did. Jon became tense and tongue-tied at home, sucked his thumb, began to stutter, and in nursery school alternated between being aggressive and whiny. (Garberino et. al.: example 2)
6. Scapegoating: blaming the child and making him feel guilty for the parent's own problems and weaknesses Example: a child asks several times for a cookie, and the last time the parent yells at her and says, "No, no see, you made me get angry!"
8. Emotional blackmailing.: threatening the child with withdrawal of love or interest in order to control the child's behavior. Example: a mother says to a child who hasn't picked up his toys, "If you don't pick up those toys, I won't love you any more."
10. "Thinging": treating children as if they were objects or status symbols, instead of persons with individual needs and interests. Example: A father says, "You had better be at the top of your class, after all, you're a doctor's daughter."

Charles Smith and Duane E. Davis in their article "Teaching Children Non-Sense" (Young Children, 1976)

Summary of Research on School-Based Child Development Education
by Robert Margolies, Ph.D.
The Motivation Center, 110 Soundview Avenue, Shelton, CT.
203-929-2093.

One of the most promising areas of primary prevention of child abuse, neglect, and family violence is via school-based curriculum on concepts of child development, child safety, nurturing, and parenting. However, two surveys, by Margolies, et.al. (2001, 2006) found that only about 8% of high school students received some direct form of child development education in their curriculum in 169 Connecticut School districts. Additionally, boys were less likely to enroll in elective "parenting" courses. Yet over ninety percent of 471 Connecticut teachers surveyed supported increasing school-based prevention programming aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect.

School-based child development education embedded in middle and high school programming can afford the opportunity to expose children of both sexes to a base of knowledge about child development, care, and parenting responsibilities with long term exposure to the curriculum. Reviews of outcome studies on parenting education for parents, victimization training for children, and community based child abuse prevention programs, all indicate a strong relationship between the comprehensiveness, length, and breadth of programs and positive outcome (Cox, 1997, Daro, 1996; Finkelhor, 1998), and the failure of programs without multi-level, multi-factor, and multi-system components (Cox, 1998; Ellis, 1998). School based training would provide the structure for repeated exposure to skills, over time and developmental level, with potential for family and community involvement. Curriculum effectiveness also requires a behavioral rehearsal component, a solid theoretical base, and full program implementation - all components which can easily be woven into the structure of school based curriculum.

Knowledge of child development relates directly to positive parenting and child safety. Perhaps the most advanced theoretical base to guide insight into curriculum needs related directly to parenting skills has been developed by Bavoieck, in a series of pre- and post test skill training studies using the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Index (AAPI). Through item and factor analyses he identified five separate skill areas, which independently predict parents abusive behavior based on pre-parent and parent attitudes. The factors are;

level of parental expectation, empathic awareness of children's needs, refraining from corporal punishment, reversed parent-child roles, and promoting empowerment vs. blind obedience. As an example of support of Bavolect's factors, high parental expectations and corporal punishment are known to be related to abusive outcomes, and empathy has been shown to be critical to parenting. (Kolko, 1996). Child development and parenting skills derived from Bavolect's field tested and theoretically driven programs have been shown to be teachable, learned easily, and to result in marked attitude and knowledge change for teenage and adult trainees (Bavolect, 1999).

The Parenting Project (2002), provided a summary of outcome studies on six parenting programs for children and teens. "Baby Think It Over" is a parenting simulation that uses a computerized infant simulator. Research indicates it has been shown effective in deferring adolescent's decisions to become parents, decreased pregnancy compared to controls, with student's gaining knowledge of parenting complexities. "Dad's Make a Difference" focuses on educating youth about the importance of fathers in children's lives. Participants showed increased knowledge and attitude in appropriate direction maintained over time, feelings of usefulness of program information and sharing of knowledge with others not exposed to the program. "Educating Children for Parenting" focuses on knowledge of early child development and nurturing and caring skills through instruction and community based parent/child visiting. Positive effects of learning, knowledge and understanding of child development, and ability to generate solutions to child rearing problems have been demonstrated. "Education for Parenting" teaches youth caring skills through child development curriculum and direct exposure to parents and infants during training. Outcome results indicate more accurate observation ability, improved identification of age-appropriate behavior, increased valuing of the role of parents, and increased knowledge of physical and social child development concepts. "Parents Under Construction" is a comprehensive k-12 curriculum teaching child development, problem-solving, discipline, and communication skills. Results of numerous outcome studies begun in 1994 have found the program effective in teaching child caring skills, changing attitudes regarding non-violent discipline techniques, and having positive effect on student empathy in child rearing with specific populations.

Further evidence to encourage greater use of child development centered

pre-parenting programs is found in the results of high quality outcome research on in-vivo parent training. Long term positive effects of an intensive home visit parent training protocol have been reported by Olds and associates (Kitzman, et. al., 1997; Olds, et. al., 1997; Olds, et. al., 1998). This training has been found to have notable effects on reducing repeated child bearing, child abuse and neglect, and on the offspring's later criminal and antisocial behavior fifteen years after the intervention. Britner and Repucci (1997) demonstrated excellent effect sizes in attitude change, reduced subsequent pregnancy, higher educational attainment, and reduced child abuse reports due to a twelve week parenting education course for young teen mothers. These conclusions are also supported in a series of literature reviews by Macmillan, et. al. (1999). This body of research suggests that direct modeling and exposure of youth to baby and toddler care experiences, a key component of child development education, will also yield long term, positive results, especially if combined with pre and post natal educational programs for parents to be.

References available on request